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ABSTRACT

A small-scale collaboration between members of a school of education and a public school district (involving some reading/language arts faculty and students from the University of Texas on the one hand and the curriculum director, volunteer reading teachers, media specialists, and elementary teachers in a school district in San Antonio, Texas on the other) illustrates how schools of education and public schools may forge partnerships to create new forms of teacher education and conduct inquiry about teaching and learning. The collaborative efforts centered on moving toward a literature base for the elementary language arts curriculum and illustrate Gary Griffin's seven critical features of an effective clinical teacher-education program. Griffin's framework proposes that the program must be embedded in a school context, and that the collaborative effort should be context-sensitive, purposeful and articulated, participatory, knowledge-based, ongoing, developmental, analytic, and reflective. (Four figures are attached.) (SR)

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NANCY ROSER

# A Partnership for Change: A University Perspective

Four years ago, those of us who teach teachers in the U.S were issued a warning. The warning came in the form of a report titled Tomorrow's Teachers from the Holmes group, a consortium of nearly 100 Colleges of Education, representing research institutions with a commitment to making their teacher education programs more rigorous and connected. The report warned of the peril of research universities continuing to neglect their part of the responsibility for elementary and secondary education. Tomorrow's Teachers went on to outline a general agenda of action---centering on teacher education---that research universities should *take to* the public schools. This spring, the Holmes Group issued a follow-up report. The second report is titled Tomorrow's Schools and it contains design principles for entering and sustaining partnerships between public schools and universities to create new forms of teacher

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education and for inquiry about teaching and learning.

The message in both reports is similar: we must connect schools of education with public schools, that is, a School of Education must shape an identity as a professional school with strong bonds to the public schools and 'strong roots in reflective practice.' Further, the partnership must be real--meaning it must be a partnership among peers rather than a paternalistic or exploitative one. Practicing teachers and teacher educators, administrators and administrator educators, must work together to make fine schools for children that are places of professional development as well. School and university faculties should collaborate in research about the problems of teaching and learning so that exchanges of expertise can "refresh and even reshape the curriculum and teaching at the university and the school."

Tomorrow's Schools, the second report, urges the establishment of Professional Development Schools, which is a new educational institution connecting a university-based school of education to one or more public elementary and secondary schools. Across the U.S., these first professional development schools are starting to sprout, but making changes in public schooling in the U.S. has

been compared with turning a battleship around--not an easy thing to do. One illustrious dean of education remarked that while it is much easier to see changes that need to be made in your neighbor's back yard, it is ultimately easier to change things in your own.

Yet, on smaller scales and in smaller ways, members of faculties and schools are working together as they have for a long while --in student teacher supervision, in school-based research, in fulfilling adjunct faculty roles, and even in effecting curricular change. The downside, of course, is that these efforts are often tangential to the faculty member's major role responsibility, often assumed as an additional load andviewed as of little value on the home campus.

Even so, it is one such story of small-scale collaboration that I would like to share. Although certainly not a collaborative effort akin to establishing a Professional Development School, it is rather a story of a more easily effected change--akin to turning about a skiff rather than a battleship. The story is the the development of a solid relation not between a total College of Education and a school district, but rather between certain faculty in that university (in this case, some reading/language arts faculty and students at the

University of Texas) and the curriculum director, volunteer reading teachers, media specialists, and elementary teachers in a school district in San Antonio, Texas.

To tell the story of the partnership, I borrow from the Research in Teacher Education (RITE) framework developed by Gary Griffin and his associates at the Research and Development Center in Teacher Education at the University of Texas. Using these standards of an effective clinical teacher education program, you and I can look more critically at the collaborative efforts I will describe. The RITE framework offers seven critical features of an effective program, whether at preservice, induction, or inservice levels. Overarching the seven is the "defining property" which holds that programs must be embedded in a school context (and given that) that they must be: 1) context sensitive, 2) purposeful and articulated, 3) participatory, 4) knowledge-based, 5) ongoing, 6) development; and 7) analytic and reflective. The defining property, then, is the framework in which the program is to be "envisioned, implemented, and monitored. (p. 7) . The critical features are the program characteristics that must be present within the defining property. The program's effectiveness is no doubt dependent upon the

interaction of all these features over time. In an attempt to make the collaboration more comprehensible, I'll apply in turn my modified view of each criterion feature to the collaborative effort I describe..

The defining property. Programs must be embedded in a school context. Griffin cites two prevailing views of the relation of context to the preparation and continuing growth of teachers. The first view holds that nothing of real importance is learned until the teacher is faced with the daily problems and possibilities posed by students in classrooms. This view is capsulized in the dichotomous phrases "ivory tower" and "real life." This dichotomy is the viewpoint of many teachers who describe themselves as "in the trenches" and university personnel as "heads in the clouds." According to those holding this view, the university deals with theory whereas the schools teach the more practical and more highly valued skills necessary to become effective as a teacher. This view is less open to collaborative efforts.

But he second view of the context in the education of teachers, according to Griffin, is a more comprehensive one--encompassing not just accommodation to the context but seeing the context as a means for a collaborative relationship

by which the teachers and university faculty learn about the context, from it, in it, and learn how to act upon classrooms and schools for the purpose of improvement. It is the second view that permits disciplined inquiry and gives the potential for teacher education and for faculty-school partnerships.

For my colleague, Jim Hoffman, and me at the University of Texas, the context was opened by an invitation to talk with the schools in the Northside Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas about a read-aloud project we had been working with. As I said earlier, this was not the beginning of a total university/district collaboration, but rather a sampling, a neighborhood / a community of university faculty and public school people who felt we shared some common concerns and goals and wanted to explore those together. The first step toward a partnership had been taken.

1. The first critical feature is that The collaboration is context sensitive. Contexts as discussed by the RITE framework are assumed to be positive environments for learning the important social and professional manifestations of teaching. A nurturing context would, for example, have as norms strong and positive leadership, a high degree of professional collegiality, and a shared sense of

mission. These were indeed the kinds of norms that we met in the school district; Nora Forester, the curriculum director for reading and language arts knew her teachers well, and supported their efforts to move toward a literature-base for their language arts program. A few of these teachers had heard of an attempt that Dr. Hoffman and I had been making working toward a literature-base to instruction in classrooms in far south Texas (Brownsville), classrooms in which children are predominantly Spanish speakers and children of poverty, and children for whom there was little time or resources for sharing good books or for talking and writing. These Hispanic children, exposed to good stories read aloud and to story talk and writing centers, had made strides in reading on standardized and individual tests; their teachers and we had presented these findings at a Texas Education Agency conference. And so, the San Antonio teachers, based on their own struggles and successes, and wishing to hear more about this project effort we had titled Language to Literacy, asked their curriculum director to find out more. After talks between the Curriculum Director, her assistant and us, we were invited to meet with the school principals and selected teachers, talking and listening, all of us sharing our experiences and

questions. Aspects of our earlier project seemed sensical for this district, so together with teachers in seven selected schools, we began to plan. The teachers wanted better ways to select and share literature, to encourage response, to build independent readers, and to ensure success. We wanted to work beside them to answer questions these questions and also to research the role of literature in encouraging children's thoughtful responses.

2. The collaboration is purposeful and articulated. It is the conventional wisdom that travelers know their destination. In education, sometime we feel fortunate just to know our direction. In this case, we did share some common direction and goals: that is, we intended to introduce the best in children's literature, give children time to talk about it and respond in many ways. We wanted to offer more opportunities to write--initially in response to literature and ultimately for a variety of purposes. We wanted to motivate an increase in independent reading, and to build knowledgeable, appreciative book consumers. The university faculty were interested in helping the district to gather systematic data both for research purposes and for decision making. But

collaborative programs are amorphous, too; they must flex and bend with needs for changes and also when meeting brick walls. We were purposeful but not mired.

The plan was to install literature units, instructional plans for sharing related literature in the classrooms, and to build centers for reading where books invited children in. We wanted opportunities for children to talk about about books and see that talk collected in meaningful ways, and we wanted to make more systematic the children's experiences withliterature. Our project staff and the south Texas teachers had already developed approximately 70 units in English and 20 in Spanish, appropriate for grades kindergarten through second. Each unit included approximately 10 children's books, providing teachers with a story a day for a two-week period. A teaching guide was developed to accompany each set of related books. The teaching guided included suggestions to the teacher for response activities for the unit as a whole, as well as for individual books. The guide offered support for teachers' efforts to help children comprehend, produce, and enjoy written language, to grow in appreciation for literature, to think in response to literature, and ideas for encouraging discussion and comparison through

writing, art, and drama. So each unit collection was designed to exploit a similarity in the books; that is, units were developed in one of four organization ways: They were written to reflect either 1) a shared topic (e.g. Perfect Pets, Flying Machines); a similar genre (e.g. legends, fantasy, folktales); 3) a similar theme (e.g. "Size is no measure of worth"); or 4) the representative best efforts of a favorite children's author or illustrator (e.g., Ezra Jack Keats).

The unit guide also suggested the framework for a class chart that encouraged inspection of the literature pieces for the element that connected them. We called these charts the "Language Charts;" teachers used them to collect children's language of response. The chart also became the impetus for personal response logs--moving from shared to individual writing All 10 books and their guide were slipped into tote bags that also held poetry on charts, audio tapes, posters from book publishers, and an occasional videotape. These books travelled room-to-room and school-to-school, rotating every two week. As the bags traveled, teachers filled them with their own suggestions, posters, patterns, teaching tips, and paraphernalia they had used to implement the unit and were now offering to others. All of us hoped that the use of the units would

encourage children's involvement, discovery, and learning, but the real advantage in clustering the literature into units was to help children begin to synthesize, to join or relate pieces of their world that seemed to exist separately, and to encourage speculation about the relationships among books and between books and one's own world.

3. The collaboration is participatory. Because we were now working with older children, the San Antonio teachers needed units centering on longer, chapter-books, as well as units that fit their own plans and curriculum. These details we worked out together: how to get books and units together, how to best use the services of the librarian, the school reading teacher, and support staff, how to schedule a read aloud time in a more systematic way, how to encourage richer book talk and more depth of response. Teachers explored and selected from existing units, then met in groups to produce their own; the curriculum director secured funds for the books, organized places for meetings, ensured that the books could be traded expediently; teachers taught, critiqued and adapted the units, university personnel offered inservice, guidance and feedback, helping to debug the program. University

faculty also helped systematize the data collection and feedback.

4. The collaboration is knowledge based. The shared knowledge that our program efforts rested upon were as certain as our direction. So, even though knowledge wasn't evenly spread across participants, and some teachers emerged as school leaders, we all shared some assumptions as we progressed. (Show assumptions overhead)

5. The collaboration is ongoing. The program in San Antonio has been ongoing in two ways--first the conversations have continued monthly and we are entering our third year of the project. Second, because the program is voluntary--no one has to participate--the participants are committed. Third, the program is supported by the Curriculum director. Lost books are replaced; out of print titles are substituted. Butcher paper for chart making is made available in an almost endless supply. Best, the project is in the hands of the teachers. It is they who decide just what aspects of the project they will adapt to their classrooms--whether literature units and language charts, reading aloud and response logs, whether involving children in a variety of response opportunities--

drama, art, debate. During the second year of the project, teacher asked for help with adding a self-selected reading component; others wanted to link more closely their literature study with their content area instruction. We offered guidance, readings, resources, and sounding boards. The program is ongoing in another sense as well: Visitors to the school are instructed by teachers in the scope and design of the literature-based changes they have been making. The teachers themselves have carried the artifacts and books of literature study to state and national conferences in which their work was shared and explained to hundreds of interested school personnel.

6. The collaboration is developmental. The Rite framework uses the term "developmental" to refer to the orderly progression toward advanced professional status. We are somewhat proud of the plan for professional development. In our original project with the teachers of Brownsville, Texas, strong teachers emerged who volunteered to take over the spread of the programs' elements in their own schools with new teachers and in other grades. These teachers also introduced their efforts to other schools in the district, and helped them to et started with using tradebooks and writing in their

programs. These volunteer teachers worked in small groups to design inservice 'training' programs that became much like traveling teaching kits, full of artifacts, slides, tapes, and aids of all kinds.

In San Antonio, the teachers who have been longest in the project have added elements to their literature programs. For example, we have worked together toward more curriculum integration (with the units and content instruction). We used the basic rubric of the Language Chart as a data chart for collapsing multiple sources of discourse. Some teachers have initiated independent reading programs in their second year; others have begun variations on chapter book units that include book clubs of readers who meet for discussion, and theme exploration through companion book studies. The more proficient they become, the more they pursue. Second, the teachers' proficiency has been worked into the ongoing nature of the program. In this its third year, another 7 schools have asked to participate. This year, those seven schools helped us by serving as control schools for our research/evaluation purposes; next year, those teachers will be the novices. This year's novices will be the experts, meeting in grade alike groups with novices. From among the teachers who have worked with literature and writing for two years, a

select team will begin to work first toward systematizing the program to match with the district's demands, and second, to become the "trainers" (for want of a better word) for the the ongoingness of the program within the district.

7. The collaboration is analytic and reflective. The RITE framework specifies that there must be time set aside in a quality program for the purposes of analysis and reflection. It has long been hypothesized, according to Griffin, that reflecting upon one's activities is a powerful way to increase professional authority and effectiveness. In truth, all of us often become so caught up in our workworlds that we either choose to avoid reflection or are forced to do so in deference to the demands of classrooms and research. Yet, there is evidence that those who regularly analyze and think about their professional activity are more perceptive and influential teachers. Time for reflection was also part of the plan. Afterschool sessions across the two years of the project have provided for sharing and reflecting of all kinds of aspects of the effort, e.g, the functions that Language charts are serving, for discussing and comparing the influence of the shared literature on children's writing, for discussing teachers' personal

styles of story sharing and the successful ways that story conversations can be enriched. Storytime, itself, has become a point of reflection--its value inspected against, for example, more time for independent reading. The university faculty members are also part of the reflection. We are monitoring state scores and standardized test results, writing samples, and independent reading to watch for differences in schools in which the project has been implemented compared with other schools in the district. We are altering inservice options and responding to teacher's needs for additional units. We are working together to make the book exchanges more fluid, the program more systematic, and ever more under the direction of the participants.

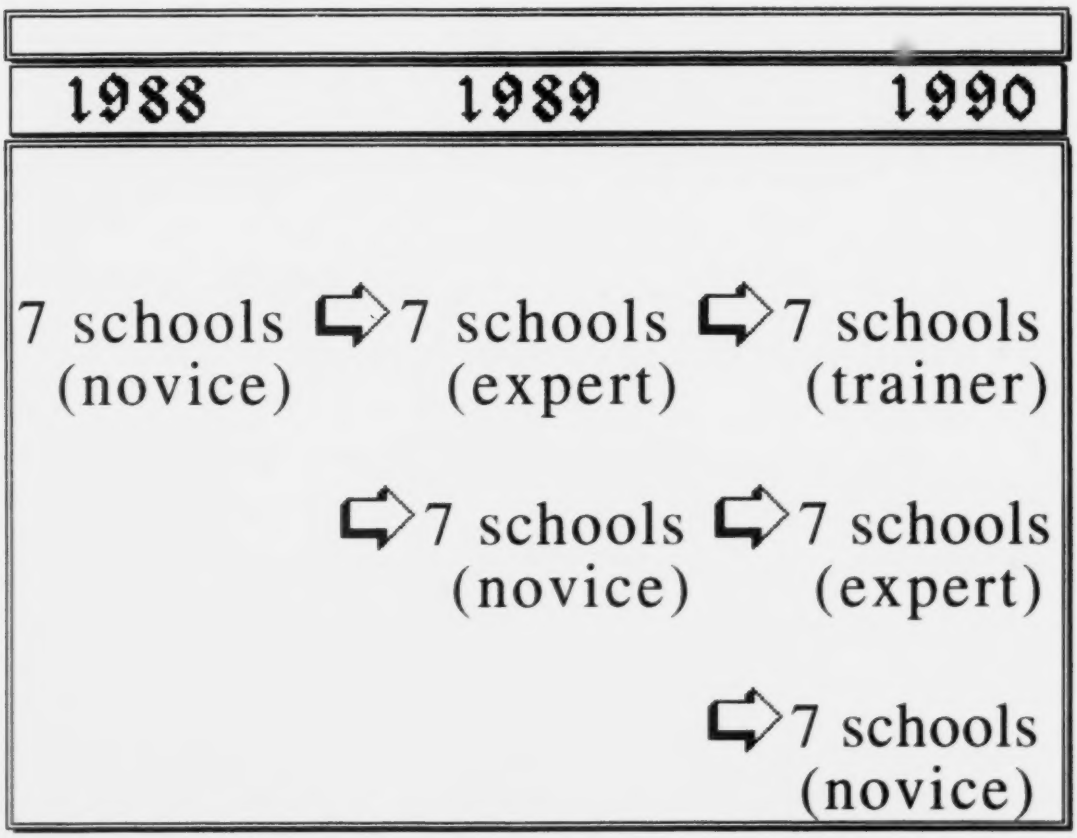
## Conclusion

Through the use of these seven critical features, I have tried to explain the turning about not of a battleship but of one small skiff. Because, perhaps, the answer to collaboration for change on major scales--whether we speak of schools, universities, or even countries--is the same as it has always been--beginning with communities of collaborators in one's own backyard.

*after G. Griffin. "Clinical Teacher Education" In J. Hoffman & S. Edwards. (Eds.) Reality and Reform in Clinical Teacher Education. New York: Random House, 1986.*

| Research in Teacher Education: Critical Features of an Effective Clinical Teacher Education Program | |
|---|---|
| **Defining Property:** | **The program must be embedded in a school context.** |
| **Feature #1:** | **The collaborative effort is context-sensitive.** |
| **Feature #2:** | **The collaborative effort is purposeful and articulated.** |
| **Feature #3:** | **The collaborative effort is participatory.** |
| **Feature #4:** | **The collaborative effort is knowledge-based.** |
| **Feature #5:** | **The collaborative effort is ongoing.** |
| **Feature #6:** | **The collaborative effort is developmental.** |
| **Feature #7:** | **The collaborative effort is analytic and reflective.** |

# An Ongoing Collaboration



# The Partnership for Change

# The Shared Assumptions of the Language to Literacy Project

1. The development of literacy skills can best be understood as an extension of oral language skills and subsequently as a part of an interactive system of language processes that develop in mutually supportive ways.

2. Literacy skill development is nurtured best in schools that provide experiences with good stories offered in a supportive, motivating environment in which there are ample opportunities to read and write in purposeful ways.

3. The social context that best supports literacy is one in which teachers and students are directly and actively involved in literacy learning.

4. Good stories offer children the best of language and explore themes in creative, insightful and skillful ways. Good literature invites readers to explore personal meaning.

5. Children who find value and purpose in reading will read.

6. Language and thought are stretched and flexed by opportunities to talk about literature, and respond in a variety of ways.

Appendix 16

END

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